

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Rhodes College



Rhodes Community,

It has been a busy and exciting first year at Rhodes, and I am tremendously honored to have joined this extraordinary community.

One of my biggest priorities for my first year was meeting with, listening to, and learning from as many members of the Rhodes family as possible, so my work this year included a great deal of travel and conversations. Provost Kathy Bassard and I met with 30 academic departments and programs to learn more about the faculty's work and hear their ideas and concerns, and I visited virtually every staff office and department. I traveled to Nashville, Boston, Atlanta (twice), Washington, D.C. (twice), Philadelphia, New York City (twice), New Canaan, New Orleans, Dallas (twice), Houston (twice), Austin, Birmingham, and Chicago to meet with alumni, parents, and friends of the college and/or host welcome receptions. And I met hundreds of students, whether it was during my weekly office hours, at a meeting with a student organization, while listening to a poster presentation about incredibly sophisticated research, or while sitting alongside students in the bleachers cheering for one of our great Rhodes sports teams. I also had the pleasure of meeting with dozens of community leaders throughout the wonderful city of Memphis.

Thanks to the dedicated work of our faculty and staff, we have accomplished much together this year. The bullet points below summarize just a few of these highlights.

- We have hired and successfully onboarded fantastic new vice presidents of Marketing and Communications, Enrollment, and Student Life, and hired a new chief of staff in the President's Office.
- Rhodes students were very successful in seeking highly competitive, national fellowships: four Rhodes students were awarded Fulbright fellowships, two were named Goldwater Scholars, and one secured the Thomas J. Watson fellowship. In addition, two faculty members, Nikolaos Zahariadis and Eric Henager, were awarded Fulbrights this year.
- Our Admissions team generated the second-highest total first-year applications in Rhodes' history (over 6,100). It also generated the largest international student applicant pool ever, with 1,970 applications. As of today, we have received 501 deposits for first-time students this fall compared to 494 at this time last year. Applications and deposits from transfer students are trending ahead of last year.
- We implemented the first paid parental leave policy for staff and increased the faculty paid parental leave policy from 12 weeks to a full semester.
- We hired nine new faculty on the tenure track and converted three faculty from non-tenure track to tenure track positions.
- Career Services launched the Rhodes Career Closet (providing free professional clothing), serving nearly 100 students since its opening in January 2023.
- The inaugural Faculty Leadership Institute cohort has completed its three-semester leadership sequence to build the faculty leadership pipeline at Rhodes.
- Provost Bassard appointed the first Associate Dean for Global Initiatives with funds from a two-year grant from a national foundation.
- We secured major gifts to support new initiatives in the Psychology and Biology departments and will be making some more exciting announcements about additional funding this summer.
- Academic Affairs built a new Innovation Framework, to assist the college in creating a structure, process, and culture of innovation. This included the formation of the Innovation Team, comprised of leaders from various divisions of the college. This team considered two "big idea" innovation proposals from the Faculty Leadership Institute, and the team offered its feedback and recommendations for next steps.
- The Advancing Inclusive Excellence task force was charged with developing recommendations to make our policies and department/program cultures more equitable. Upon their recommendation, Academic Affairs has engaged Systematic Equity Solutions to provide a holistic assessment of our faculty review policies.
- Rhodes held its first-ever Disability Justice & Disability Studies Symposium.
- The Information Services project team completed a successful launch of Workday Student and students registered for classes in the new system this spring.
- We created a new Rhodes College Staff Advisory Council. This group will plan activities and events to build community among Rhodes staff and raise issues or concerns for the administration to consider.
- We will be increasing the retirement contribution from 8% to 9% effective July 1, 2023.
- We restored the 32-meals plan benefit for faculty and staff eating at the Refectory and significantly enhanced our dining offerings in response to feedback from students.
- We have made significant enhancements to our health plan and are in the process of soliciting bids from other health insurance companies so we can evaluate whether there might be a better option. The enhancements include added in-network coverage for emergency services rendered at Methodist Hospital locations, better prescription drug coverage, and coverage of preventive health services at 100% when provided in-network.
- Rhodes Giving Day set new records for gifts made to the college in a giving challenge. Rhodes received 1,116 gifts from members of our community, which is 105 more gifts than last year and 69 more than our most successful challenge in 2021. There was a 6% increase in alumni giving, a 39% increase in student giving, and a 100% increase in faculty and staff giving.
- Enrollment Services integrated new major information systems (Workday and PowerFAIDS) to support and enhance operational processes for Admissions.
- Rhodes launched its first spring family weekend called Spring Fest in April. During the weekend, we hosted the American Mock Trial National Championship Tournament, an academic conference, mini classes, music events, and multiple sporting events, including track and field, softball, baseball, lacrosse, and tennis.
- We completed and opened the EV-C residence hall, the new Multicultural Lodge, and the Mike and Nancy Clary Golf Facility. We have also launched a planning process to begin the renovation of our older residence halls.
- Our Marketing and Communications department completed campus-wide research to develop a new brand story for Rhodes, brought production of *Rhodes* magazine in-house, and worked with Admissions to develop more strategic messaging for prospective students.
- We launched a Student Success and Retention Task Force to evaluate how we can better support our students in all facets of their Rhodes experience.
- We established the new Mel Richey Student Compassionate Care Fund to assist Rhodes students who encounter an unforeseen and urgent financial emergency or event that would otherwise prevent them from continuing their education at Rhodes. Similarly, the Mel Richey Employee Compassionate Care Fund will assist Rhodes faculty and staff who are experiencing a temporary hardship because of a significant life event.
- Student Life created a new Multicultural Experience Conference and MVP Welcome Reception.
- The Student Counseling Center was awarded a grant through the Coalition for Healthy and Safe Campus Communities for developing and implementing a campus prevention plan focused on mental health and substance use.
- The college implemented comprehensive new compliance training for all faculty and staff that includes several modules related to inclusive excellence. Additionally, some individuals have been trained to facilitate the Safe Zone curriculum on LGBTQ+ identities, gender, and sexuality, and we have added a question about commitment to inclusive excellence to our performance evaluation system.
- We launched a Campus Safety Task Force to examine our safety policies and procedures and identify ways to improve. We will soon launch the Campus Safety Advisory Board, which will continually evaluate our safety and security practices and policies and work with community partners. We also increased the number of campus patrol units, installed LED lighting on West Campus, added additional security cameras, enhanced security procedures at our campus entry gates, and contracted with a third party to increase patrols around the perimeter of campus. All campus safety officers completed bias, de-escalation, and CPR training. The Emergency Operations Team and Senior Leadership participated in an active shooter tabletop exercise that included representatives from Memphis Fire and Police Departments. Campus Safety also conducted active shooter training for the Admission, Counseling Center, and Human Resources departments.
- Our Rhodes student-athletes secured six Southern Athletic Association Championships and two NCAA National Tournament Appearances. Seven Individual student-athletes earned national meet appearances and three students were named All-Americans. We also had six Southern Athletic Association Players of the Year, 27 Southern Athletic Association First-Team All-Conference performers, and three Southern Athletic Association Coaches of the Year. Four hundred and five students were named to Southern Athletic Association All-Academic Teams, meaning they had a 3.25 or higher cumulative GPA.
- We hired a new chief institutional research and data strategist and introduced a new model of integrated institutional effectiveness that will guide the college's direction-setting, assessment and evaluation of data, accountability, and business intelligence. We are currently wrapping up a search for a new senior data analyst who will help us meet some of the college's complex data needs.
- Our *Lynx to the Past* podcast has hit over 100,000 listens.
- A total of 94 classrooms were improved with technology upgrades or replacements.
- The Lynx Lair was improved with new audio equipment and streaming TV service, a long-standing desire of student organizations.
- I launched a monthly newsletter for alumni and parents, which also goes to faculty, staff, and students, to highlight all the wonderful things going on at Rhodes and to increase affinity for and engagement with the college.

We cannot wait to celebrate all our outstanding graduates at Commencement on May 13. This commencement season is especially sweet for me because my youngest son is also a proud member of the class of 2023, and will be graduating from his college on May 12. Unfortunately, this scheduling conflict means I will have to miss the Rhodes events on May 12, but I promise I will rush back as soon as his ceremony ends so I can cheer on our outstanding graduates at our beautiful ceremony Saturday morning. (Pray for sunny skies and cool temperatures!). I am so grateful that you are part of this remarkable Rhodes community.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Collins

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